THE PROPER POSITION OF MUSIC IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

BY

JOHN THOMSON

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THIS subject is so wide that I know of no sermon or address long enough to deal with it thoroughly. The contrasted sermons for length and brevity are, first, the celebrated one of Buddha, who spoke on the subject of the True Law during fully sixty kalpas, each kalpa representing 4,320 millions of years, making his sermon 259 billions and 200 millions of years long, always sitting on the same seat with immovable body and tranquil mind. And the whole assembly continued seated on the same seats listening to the preaching for sixty kalpas, there being not a single creature in that group who felt fatigue of body or mind. Second, a very different sermon by a Quaker, who, at the end of an hour's consideration, was moved by the Spirit and preached as follows: "Beware of puffèd-upness."

I will take a different course, believing that the subject is largely one for debate rather than an essay or paper.

Public worship consists of prayer and praise. So far as prayer, when offered by the minister, is concerned, the music can only be that of recitation in a monotone; but when we come to the division of praise, the field for variety and the grounds for differences of opinion as to what music should be are very wide.

Both in the seen and unseen world, songs of choral worship are apparently a mere matter of course. In a Church Club it is not necessary to do more than to mention how Christ's birth was heralded by music, and how the music of the great hereafter is frequently mentioned by St. John.

Music has always been used as well by Pagans, as by Jews and Christians. We have, for example, accounts of music at the dedication of the Temple; music as used by the Israelites before the walls of Jericho; as used by the Disciples at the Last Supper; and as used by St. Paul and St. Silas in prison. There was also the music used by the first Christians in the catacombs, and by the Puritans of Cromwell's time when entering battle.

If it has been the custom of all peoples, civilized and uncivilized, at all times to use music as an almost inherent part of public worship, then it becomes a very important thing to ascertain what is its proper position in the public worship of Christians.

Music must be the handmaid of worship, fitting and appropriate, but never allowed to usurp the place of worship. If music does not speak and emphasize the spirit of the words to which it is wedded and of which it is the exponent and accompaniment, then that music is out of place.

Church music has grown with the growth of the Church. It is almost beyond dispute that from the Temple and from the Church music has been introduced into the lives of homes, the street, and public gatherings. For centuries the music must have been little more than the use of a plain chant. There is a great difference of opinion as to how much of this chant was taken from Pagan and Jewish sources. But, however improved, the ecclesiastical chant was truly plain, simple, sung in unison and with melodies ranging within a very restricted compass.

In the middle of the ninth century harmonies began to be used. The novelties of the subsequent two or three centuries were very distressing. Music almost ceased to express the words to which it was set, and many instances are known in which four voices or sets of voices would be singing, one the words from the Kyrie, another from the Gloria, a third from the Credo, and the fourth words from the Ave Maria, all at one time.

I do not dwell on the history of music. Suffice it to say that Palestrina arose and in 1565 was first heard his *"Missa Papæ Marcelli."* That Mass became the model for Church compositions during a century, until, in fact, Carissimi and others arose, bringing in again more modern music.

On the assumption that Church music must express and bring vividly to the heart and mind of the worshipper the words set, consider, just for two moments, instances that are probably familiar to every one in the room. Fancy, in Mozart's Twelfth Mass, finding that by careless repetition we find this sentence: *"Crucifixus et Homo Factus est."* Think of saying, He was

crucified *and* was made Man. What a disruption of meaning!

Out of the sixteen Masses written by Haydn, only the Masses 4, 5, 6 and 9 have the words correct. In four of them (1, 2, 3 and 16) the words "Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son" are altogether omitted.

Adaptations of music written to one set of words and put to another are generally a torture. The organist of a church I know very well "adapted" the *Gloria in Excelsis* from Mozart's Twelfth Mass to the words of the *Magnificat,* and in this song of praise of the Blessed Virgin he calmly omitted the verse, "All generations shall call me blessed."

There are at least three principal forms of Church music:

1. The plain chant.
2. Harmonized music (Alla Palestrina).
3. Modern figured music.

Grant, if you will, the excellence of the Alla Palestrina style, and the fact of its continued use in the Sistine Chapel. It would be unwise to say that no change or variety shall be allowed. The point comes promptly to this: If Palestrina and his methods only are to be followed, where shall we land? Palestrina's music is written to be unaccompanied. Are we to reject organs and orchestral accompaniments? We know perfectly well that in Scotland, in particular, bags of whistles and fiddles were objected to, so much so that when a violin was introduced in Presbyterian worship the elder exclaimed, "Awa' wi' yer fiddle, yer canna worship God a-scrapin' cat-gut."

Pope Innocent XII. prohibited harps in the Church, because it reminded him of the theatre. Had he lived to hear Gounod's "Messe Solonnelle," I think he would have promptly modified his decree.

Now, in considering the proper position of music in public worship, we must wrestle with two distinct problems, and in each we shall find a small regiment of disputable questions.

In the Church of England and the Episcopal Church of America there are two broad divisions of worship. There are the daily Offices, as it were of the Church, Morning and Evening Prayer, whether you call them by those names or denominate them Matins and Evensong. In these the choice of appropriate and uplifting music is very different from that which is appropriate for the great Eucharistic service. Elaborate music is not needed in any such degree in simple offices, but it is an important feature in setting forth the dignity and beauty of the Eucharistic service. In both these cases, the music must be in strict accordance with the character of the services.

Take one of the commonest things we have to deal with, processions of the choir at Evensong, and the same, of course, applies to morning services. (I do not speak of solemn processions around the church.) Because it is good to have a processional hymn sung as the choir enters and again as it leaves the church at Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, and Whitsuntide, is it at all desirable to take away all character from the procession by having it every Sunday? I, for one, decidedly say no.

And then comes this point: What is more regrettable than the organist or person responsible for selecting the processional hymns, altogether forgetting that a procession is a march, and with all cheerfulness or wilfulness, or ignorance, selecting a tune in three-four, six-eight, or irregular measure, and expect a decently ordered procession to be obtained? With the procession marching left-right, left-right, a serious jolt is given to the ear of a musical person on finding a three-four or irregular measure selected. Is it any wonder that the result is a shamble into or out of the chancel? Moreover, would any person having charge of a stage representation allow what is called a procession such as that we see every Sunday in our churches? The choristers would be trained how to walk, as are soldiers and all such bodies What do we see? A Crucifix or Cross followed closely by three sets of two boys, then a gap, then two more boys, and then a gap, and then, higgledy-piggledy, follow the men at varying distances. As Hamlet says, "Reform it altogether." If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing decently and in order, as is the phrase in our Prayer Book.

Then, naturally in a talk on the music of the Offices of the Church, we come to the burning question of chants. Plain-song or Gregorian music, as it is popularly (but incorrectly) termed, is magnificent, but not unless it is properly rendered.

The revival of plain-song in London is an exceedingly interesting subject. With the Oxford Movement came a desire to improve the singing of the Psalter as well as the character of the hymns, and the hymns were gradually produced by such men as John Mason Neale and others. The baldness of the tunes used to them became apparent to many. And then came a trio of Revivalists: Thomas Helmore, William Henry Monk, and Spencer Nottingham, and to the list were added many like J. W. Doran, and the subject was taken up with great care and painstaking, and the Psalter Noted and Hymnal Noted were prepared and put into use.

The first cardinal principle of plain-song singing is that there should be no attempt to sing in measures or bars, and that each

syllable should have its proper note. Square-tailed and diamond notes became absolutely familiar to those connected with English choirs, but all the singers were taught to sing them with a rolling swing, hardly describable in a paper, but never to sing them as having measured time, as is the case when using semibreves, crochets, and quavers. The swing and lilt of the Gregorian chant, royal in its character, quickly became well known and was accepted with satisfaction.

Necessarily, immediately, in addition to these songs came a revival of the great Catholic melodies to which the Church had for centuries sung the *Veni Creator, Vexilla Regis,* and a dozen of those which were set to plain-song and used in churches, such as St. Matthias, Stoke Newington; All Saints, Margaret street; St. Mary Magdalene, Paddington, and a hundred less known but important churches.

To hear "The Royal Banner Forward Goes" sung on Palm Sunday to the grand ancient melody was something that marked the day in your memory for a year. Why, in some churches I have heard it sung in harmony! This seems incredible, but it is true. Read Mr. Curwen's book of visits to the practices of the principal choirs in London and its neighborhood, such as the Chapel Royal, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, King's College, and so on. Then you will see what an effort was made to uplift Church music. But no one could have heard in those churches such atrocities as are perpetrated by organists who take the ancient hymns and venture to almost kill the worshippers by Anglicizing the *Vexilla Regis,* and making it sound something like an unhealthy jig coupled with St. Vitus's dance, instead of one of the most glorious battle-songs of the Catholic Church. A thing that is perfectly unpardonable, if it were not done in ignorance, is to take a Psalter, and try, apparently with murder in their hearts, to victimize a congregation by having an Anglicized form of a Gregorian tune netted and tied up after the rules of an Anglican chant; producing a result as different from a Gregorian as is a glorious bloom of a passion flower when compared to a sprig of potato-plant bloom. The Gregorian and Anglican chants are all right, each in its own proper place, but horrible when found mated in a miscegenated union.

Our choirs do not practice the chants and hymns under sufficient supervision. Organists, like all musical people, are (shall we say?) difficult to control and work with. At a church I went to many years ago there was a very celebrated organist, who was a master of his instrument but not master of himself. He had periods when he imbibed too much, but when one Sunday morn-

ing he insisted on sitting on the keys, as soon as the wind was well in, and using the organ stool for his fingers, he was dismissed; but he was so excellent an organist that his sentence of dismissal was remitted to one month's suspension. Those were great days for in-voluntaries, or, as we now speak of them, organ recitals; so, on the first Sunday after his return he selected as his return-to-duty voluntary Handel's great chorus, "Fixed in His Everlasting Seat." At all events, from his point of view, the words attached to the music had a good and appropriate meaning. But, after all, he was not so unfortunate as the precentor of one of the English cathedrals, who persisted on using pretty frequently in that Christian fane, without any words or prelude or sequence (to modify their meaning), Handel's glorious chorus, "He trusted in God that He would deliver Him; Let Him deliver Him if He will have Him."

The first thing to be done, if any reform is to come, is to recognize that one person cannot be the occupant of every post in a government. In a great cathedral there is always one person appointed to the office of precentor, whose duty it is to make out the list of music and to hold the organist and the choir to strict account for executing these selections effectively and properly. Nobody who has not worked with choirs knows what a various-minded crowd of people can be gathered together if you set your mind on it. It is almost without doubt that when St. Paul wrote his advice, "Live peaceably with all men, if possible," the exception, "if possible," was put in with special reference to choristers.

Do not abandon Anglican music if the Anglican music can best be used in your services. One of the points that leads to the feebleness of the plain-song chanting, undoubtedly, is the ineffective way in which the "tone" is given to the choir and congregation, and on this let me call your particular attention to the preface and advice of Helmore, as to the use of the Psalter Noted.

When an organist gives out the Gregorian tone on some of the softest stops in his organ and in a hurried, harmonized and excessively irregular way (I wish I could illustrate my meaning), instead of using the diapasons and pedals in unison, giving it out on the great organ with dignity, and at the pace at which the psalm is to be chanted, who can wonder at the general failure of the choir and congregation to acquire the steady, rolling dignity of the Gregorian tone. This is exactly on a par with the failure of a large number of organists to announce the hymn tune with anything like a useful result. The tunes should be rendered in a plain, dignified manner, setting the time and enforcing the majesty of the tune on the ears of the congregation. You know

as well as I that in the majority of cases the giving out of the tune is a filigree imitation of what is wanted. Who, in the great churches of Germany and in the majestic works of Bach, fails to recognize when the "Ein Feste Burg" 'is given out with rolling pomposity that the congregation are to join in as the tune is set, and as it is impressed on their ears and brains?

If an orchestra were to play the first part of a concerto in the slipshod, careless way which I have described as being the usual rather than the unusual way, where would the soloist, the pianist, the violinist be?

Giving out the chant or the hymn tune is as much a part of the important result which is sought as is the singing or playing of it afterwards.

I have used up too much time, and can only speak but shortly on the proper position of music in the most important part of our worship, the Communion service, Eucharist, or Mass, whichever you please to call it.

The Mass is entirely Eucharistic, and so is worthy of the highest forms possible in rendering praise and thanksgiving.

Even in the darkest days of the Reformation we cannot but most gratefully recognize the service rendered to the Church by John Marbeck, organist of Windsor in the reign of Henry VIII. He composed or arranged the notes to the Preces and Responses used in the English cathedrals. He also noted the parts of the Communion service, like the Kyrie, the Offertory, Sanctus, and Benedictus, and so on. Having identified himself with the Protestant cause, he was sentenced to be burned, but was pardoned, I presume on account of his musical skill. He published his Book of Common Prayer in 1550, and here it should be noted that we have in America made very poor use of the plain-song, preserved to us through Marbeck. For, very naturally, soon after Marbeck's Ferial or Plain Responses became generally used, it was felt that, whilst these were beyond doubt the best of all Responses for everyday or ferial use, it was a necessity that something more should be provided to be sung on high days and holidays. Thereupon Tallis prepared a series of Responses in which the Ferial Responses were sung in the tenor as they should always be sung by the general congregation, and harmonies were provided for the bass, contralto, and treble. How few churches ever use these two sets of Responses in accordance with rule and good use! When Tallis' Responses are sung the treble is adopted as the share of the congregation. This is simply for the want of people being taught and told how to take their part in this portion of public worship.

Possibly, one of the greatest hindrances to the frank acceptance of elaborate Mass music has been the want of seeing that the part assigned to the priest or celebrant should not be unduly interfered with by the choir, and also through not providing the congregation with a proper share in the service. As to the Eucharistic music, the greater the day the greater should be the magnificence of the music, so as to be fully in keeping with the ceremonial of the altar. A fine chorale and Gradual and well-rendered *Ave Verum* in the course of the service, and possibly a congregational hymn in another part of the service, will give a right share to the people, and yet leave to the choir the use of such Masses as those of Palestrina, Gounod, Redhead, Mozart, and so on. The six musical movements of the Mass should be entirely of one composer's work, and whilst these parts may be elaborate, prudent choice will dictate that the Sanctus and Benedictus should not be so protracted as to unduly delay the celebrant. To have a Mass written after the calm and restrained style of the composers of the English cathedral schools mixed up with an elaborate Kyrie from Haydn or Lajeal is rank.

The English organist and composer, Richardson, through Messrs. Burns & Oates, has published some of the Masses of Haydn and Mozart, with the omission of improper mingling of the words corrected, but retaining all the beauty of the music.

Many of the sects have relied upon the pulpit as the principal feature of public worship, and have made the pulpit the principal feature of their building and have trusted to that to draw and hold together their congregation. If we want to make music do its proper duty by putting it in its proper position in public worship, we must treat music as the handmaid and not as the essence; just as preaching, also, never can be the essence of worship.

People of the present day will not go to church unless they have good preaching. That goes without saying. But, people will never appreciate the worth of good worship, as set forth by the Church, unless it is rendered in a dignified and consistent manner.

The sermon is not preferred to the anthem by everybody, for at Westminster Abbey, when I was a young man, it became so common a practice for the majority of the congregation to leave the building after the anthem, inflicting a reproach on the preacher who was to follow as being an uninteresting sequel, that the dean of the abbey put the sermon before the anthem, and as the majority wanted to hear the anthem they endured the sermon. They got a good deal of good teaching, and a better order was established.

Congregational singing and how best to achieve this end is a great problem. I do not suppose I have solved the question, but I hope that I may have offered a few suggestions which will bear consideration at the hands of our clergy and organists. Clergy and laity are at one in desiring to promote the best rendering of God's worship. Let us all set to work, and see if we can make our music the best that can be, and we shall have started a work that must end in good to hundreds of thousands of souls.